Micros of Monmouth - March 1988

Volume 8 Issue 1
P.O. Box 221, Englishtown, N.J. 07726

MEETING SCHEDULE:
FEBRUARY 22
MARCH 7
MARCH 21

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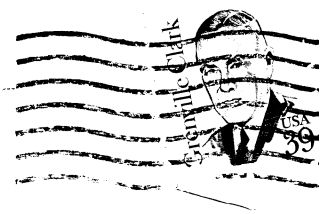

MICROS OF MONMOUTH
P.O. BOX 221
ENGLISHTOWN, NJ 07726

Richard Dere
32 Tarrytown Road
Manalapan, NJ 07726

Membership due

M*O*M
Micros of Monmouth

The Newsletter of the Computer Club of Monmouth, Inc.

The Computer Club of Monmouth, Inc. is a nonprofit organization of Atari computer enthusiasts and users who share a common interest in exchanging information about the Atari microcomputer systems.

The club meets ar the Manalapan High School at 8:00 PM on the first and third Mondays of each month. The meeting dates are changed or cancelled when a holiday or foul weather causes the school to be closed.

Neither the M.O.M. newsletter nor The Computer Club of Monmouth, Inc. is affiliated with Atari Corp., Atari Inc., Warner Communication, or any of their subsidiary companies. All use of the word "Atari" or the Fuji logo is recognized as a trademark of Atari Corp.

The M.O.M. newsletter solicits from its members reviews, news, rumors, articles, original programs, classified ads, and any other material of interest for publication. All material submitted for publication should be given to the editor at the meetings or mailed to the club address.

The material printed in the M.O.M. newsletter may be freely copied. We request that credit be given to its authors and to M.O.M. This newsletter is sent to paid-up members of the club and to other user groups on an exchange basis. User groups interested in exchanging newsletters should write to the club address.

The club supports its own Bulletin Board System that is on line 24 hours a day with a special section for M.O.M. members. The BBS is open to all types of computers after a name/address verification. The M.O.M. BBS supports 300, 1200, and 2400 baud modems.

Who's Who at M*O*M

ELECTED OFFICERS:

President	-Paul Saccone 201-308-1837
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EDITORIAL

When my first computer arrived there was a feeling of excitement in my house. I felt I was on the verge of a new adventure. And it was. I passed from the 400 to the 800 to the 130. Along the way I taught myself the nuances of the Atari systems. I powered up my 130 to 512K and waited for the next development. Along the way, and especially in the last few years, third party software writers dropped Atari software from their products. Atari Corp. guided by Tramiel resurrected itself financially from the Warner problems and built a following in Europe with ST products.

In the U.S. the ST's moved slowly because hardware distribution was and still is a problem. So, Atari bought distribution. Will it work? I don't think so. I can't see the synergy of a "high tech" computer company allied to a retail company. IBM couldn't do it. Historically, very few manufacturers can successfully operate directly with consumers.

In the meantime, I've been waiting for the 8-bit 80 column board and the IBM clones to be marketed. I don't know by who. Who has interest in 8-bit material and XT clones? Besides, the clone market is heating up again for IBM's PC/2 system.

And now I have come to the rationalization (**maybe** late) that 8-bit programming **and** software is turning into "**cultware.**" That is progress. Computers are just like other technological advances, new products replace older ones. I'm sad because some of that pioneering spirit will most likely never be rekindled in the same way that first 400 came into the house.

But don't get me wrong, I'm still in love. I recently bought an IBM clone with a 20Meg hard disk, 640K RAM, built 5 1/4 and 3 1/2 drives, a built in 1200 baud modem, and high resolution amber monitor. All for $1200. You see, I couldn't wait for Atari. Maybe there is an Atari clone in my future, but when will they appear?

Irwin Kaplan, Editor

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

First, I must extend my deepest apologies to you about the apparent delay in the newsletter's publishing. Due to problems switching editors, getting it printed, and finding people to write articles we have not been able to get the newsletter out on time. We, the board members, sincerely hope that the steps we are (or will be) taking to avoid this problems reoccurrence will work. Our solution was to hire a professional printer to do the printing for us. As the bulk is so large, no one member could handle it on their own personal copy machines. Because there is always a lack of member support, or contributions, on the most part we are making a stipulation for membership to the club. That is that over the course of the year, each member must submit at least two articles. To make this easier we are giving free MOM library disks to those that would like to review their contents for the newsletter. For an incentive, members will be allowed to keep the disk that they review. We would also like to see members write their own programs for inclusion in the newsletter. Home hardware projects and reviews of old and new software would also be greatly appreciated. Remember, you the member only get out of MOM what you put in.

Unfortunately, our Program Chairman, Mark Applebaum, had to resign due to a conflicting schedule at school. The function of this officer is to make sure that we have demonstrations lined up for each meeting and to see that MOM equipment gets taken home, and returned, after each meeting. This

office is open for nominations, we would like to fill it as soon as possible. Please see me personally if you are interested or have a nomination. As of now we have demos lined up until the end of March (this includes an ST night). We need members to volunteer for April. Remember that, in addition to software, the membership would like to see reviews of new and old hardware, home projects, and get tutorials on programming features in various languages. It's not hard, and it helps raise interest amongst the members.

Paul Saccone, President

ST INFORMER

This months newsletter contains two articles that originally appeared in **ST INFORMER**, one of the leading resources for Atari ST owners. If you have not seen an issue of it yet, I would encourage you to do so. It is filled with a wealth of knowledge that no ST user should be without. MacDonals Associates, publishers of **ST INFORMER**, would like to extend a special offer to our user group. The regular subscription rate is $15.00 a year. If we can get 10 M.O.M. members to subscribe that price would be lowered to $12.00 a year for those people. If interested please see either Paul or Betty at a meeting.

ST INFORMER will also be printing any articles from user group newsletters that it deems worthy. This is another incentive to right for M.O.M.'s newsletter. Author recognition will be given.

Paul Saccone

ATARI REVEALS PLANS FOR A NEW WORK STATION

Atari recently revealed plans to develop a new workstation based on the Reduced Instruction Set Computer (RISC). This workstation will use the Transputer T-8000, a RISC chip made by Inmos Corp.

The new workstation will have a propritary but open architecture that will accept up to three additional boards. Each board can hold four Transputers.

According to Mr. Shirav Shivji, vice president of research and development, the workstation can handle as many as 100 million instructions per seconds (MIPS) with multiple Transputers.

The system will run Helios, a Unix variant being developed by Perihelion Software, of Somerset, England.

The workstation is expected to be shipped with 4Meg of memory, and have a resolution of 1,280 by 960 pixels, with a palette of eight colors.

Networking between workstations will be achieved by using the same high-speed links that tie multiple Transputers together on a single board, giving transfer rates in excess of Ethernet (10 megabits per second).

The system should begin to ship in the second quarter of 1988 for approximately $5,000. Atari also said that a board containing one Transputer will be available for inserting in the Megat-ST. An MS-DOS emulator is also being developed for the workstation, that will allow it to run any PC or MS-DOS program at speeds of an IBM PC/AT with only a single Transputer.

Mark Applebaum

ATARI PLANT PLANNED FOR SILICON VALLEY

Reprinted from ST Informer with permission from MacDonald Associates by Rod MacDonald January 1988

Atari corporation has decided to build or acquire plant facilities in the United States by early 1988 for the assembly of Atari computers and related electronics equipment.

The entire line of Atari consumer electronics have been limited to the production capacity of the Taiwanese plant. All of the Taiwan production has not gone to the US market, but to a higher demanding European market, where Atari is a market leader, rather than an also ran.

Because the European market is taking 80% of the production of the Taiwan assemblers, Atari has had only 20% of their production capacity to sell through US dealers. This small portion of production is even further reduced from the 32% US share that was indicated several months ago.

Sources in the financial world feel that world conditions regarding the value of the dollar, and the long term effect of the dollar drop overseas, makes it economical for Atari to establish a US Plant. This plant can then supply a sufficient product to a market that is ready for faster delivery.

Set for opening in the early part of 1988, the plant is said to provide Atari with the necessary product production to pursue domestic marketing ar full speed. Said to employ about 100 people, the plant is to be located in (Silicon Valley) San Jose area of Northern California.

Neil Harris of Atari confirmed the fact that another plant is planned in the US with possible sites in either Texas or Nevada. This writer feels that Nevada would be a beneficial choice because of their "Freeport" law on warehousing facilities. Nevada has liberal tax structure on products stored, but not sold in the state.

Atari contributes low US sales to the heavy European demand on their limited production. They say that they have had to provide most of their product to that European market. Some critics of Atari have blamed their lack of US marketing skills for their lack of sales, but if this latest percentage of sales information is accurate, critics can see why no marketing effort has yet been seriously made for the US market.

The European market, because of Atari's sales position there, has been highly productive for Atari, and they have been able to test market, and finally fully market some of their new products. One product of note is the Atari PC, which is selling briskly in Europe, but which is yet to appear in the US market. Some insiders have blamed the Federal Communications Commission for slow certification of the PC, but others have said that minimal production capacity, coupled with maximum European demand, has minimized US efforts.

With increased production capacity, Atari plans to increase their market share in the US. Atari's fall 1987 announced plan for increased advertising and consumer awareness was not seen by most Atarians. With limited product capacity, Atari concentrated their television spot purchases to metro areas where the user base and potential users, as well as dealers, are concentrated. Because of prohibited national television cost Atari doesn't believe it would be profitable to overextend their marketing costs until they have warehouse stock. Because of their lagging US delivery of product, Atari has chosen to prepare for the future and this plant opening is such a move.

Neil Harris of Atari confirmed the above facts and reemphasised that there is little purpose in advertising products that are not going to be readily available.

ATARI®
Power Without the Price™

NEW PRODUCTS AT COMDEX

PC Clones, CD ROM player, multiuser software for the ST and Mega computers at COMDEX. Atari also introduced a radical new computing system based on the Inmos T-800 RISC processor.

According to Atari spokesman Sam Tramiel, this system requires a 4-Megabyte Atari Mega workstation front end to handle I/O. The transputer-based box (Abaq) comes with a single 20 MHz Inmos processor, but can be expanded to hold as many as 13 processors, all operating in parallel, with each processor operating at about 10 MIPS and 1.5 mega-flops.(This high tech talk means that the new system can operate at high speed and do several jobs at once.) Memory can also be expanded to 64 megabytes.

Display options include 1,280 x 960 pixel resolution with 16 colors and 512 x 480 pixels with as many as 1 million shades displayable at the same time.

The system software for the Abaq box is called Helios. It is described as a Unix-like, multiuser, multiprocessor operating system. Helios will support X-Windows, read both MS-DOS floppies and Unix format hard disks, and offers both a Unix C library and a Unix command subset. Several languages are available for the Abaq including C, Fortran, Pascal, and BCPL. DOS emulation software for the Abaq is under development by a third party developer.

Atari said that Abaq would be available in the second quarter of 1988, with a 4-megabyte, single processor system, priced at about $5,000. (This would be a very competitive price for a machine with this power potential.Ed.)

The Company also announced several additions to its line of PC clones, including the PC2, PC4, and PC5, all of which will be available in the first quarter of 1988, Sam Tamiel said. The PC2 will offer XT compatability with four slots, EGA graphics, a choice of 3 1/2 inch or 5 1/4 inch drives, at a price less than $1000, including a monitor. The PC4 is a five slot AT compatible with built-in VGA graphics and a superfast hard disk controller, at a cost of less than $2000. The PC5 is a 16 MHz 80386 computer. While using the Intel microprocessor, Atari intends to offer new 68000 microprocessor products in 1988, including a 68030 computer.

New software was also announced. A version of Idris a multiuser operating system for the Mega and ST, a LAN capable of networking up to 17 PCs, Megas, Sts, and Macs. Announced also was a CD ROM player for $599 to be available in February. It will be able to play CD ROM discs when attached to a ST or Mega. It will also be able to play music CD when attached to a stero.

* * * * * * * * * * *

M*O*M BBS

Following is a HELP file on how to use the StarBase I BBS, the offical M*O*M User Group Bulletin Board.

MENU DESCRIPTION

<B>-Read the System bulletin. Whenever a new bulletin is put up, it will be displayed when you log on. You can reread it with this command.

<C>-Check for mail. The BBS does this automatically when you log on. This allows you to check for old mail you haven't deleted.

<D>The DataBases

<E>-Enter a message into the current message base. Once you have entered who the message is to and the subject, you may enter text continously. When you are done, you may press RETURN twice to list the possible commands, or hit RETURN once and enter a command preceeded by a </>. For example, /S would save the message. Please do NOT use RETURNS in your message unless absolutely neccessary. That way the message will be properly formatted for any user regardless of their screen width.

Message commands:

/A - abort the message.

/Cn/search/replace/ - replace "search" text with "replace" text starting at line n. The n is optional, without it searching is from the beginning of your message.

/Gn Goto line n and re-enter the line.

/L List the message using line numbers.

/S Save the message

The best way to format a message where you want one or more RETURNS is to type control A wherever you want a RETURN inserted. This will drop the cursor to the next line as if you had entered a RETURN. Control A is saved as just a RETURN, whereas pressing the RETURN key will enter a RETURN and a SPACE into the message.

NOTE: please place a message in the base in which it belongs. Personal messages should be left using the <S> command, or you may send an Email reply to a general message by pressing <E>.

<F>-File Area. This will first display a list of the download categories. Press a letter for the category you want. You will see a list of all the files your level will allow you to download. To select a file from this list, press a <D> for download, and then enter the number at the farthest left of the filename. Missing numbers cannot be downloaded unless your level is higher. The BBS will display the filename you selected, and give the approximate download time and ask if this is what you want. If you say yes, then you will be asked what protocol to use for downloading. Only select the protocol you know your terminal supports. USE CRC or Ymodem if your terminal program supports it for the most accurate file transfer.

<G>-log-off (when you're done).

<H>-Help DataBase

<I>-System Information

<M>-Send a message to the SYSOP.

<N>-If you have a password, then the highest message number in every base will be saved with your password every time you log off. When you press <N> from the main menu, you will be given a list of all message

bases containing new messages since the last time you logged on. Select the base you want to read, and the BBS will show you the first new message in that base. Once you have read all messages in that base, you will again be given a list of bases with new messages. Enter a base number, or press RETURN to exit to the main menu.

<O>-Other BBS Lists

<P>-Your BBS Profile (Shows Password, access level, time limit, available Bases, etc)

<Q>-Use this to quickly download files instead of listing them out ahead of time. If the file is in a subdirectory, then you will need to enter the subdirectory, a ">" and the filename (sub>file). You may also use the format sub\filename. Note: Do not enter the extension when downloading using the <Q> option - it will be ignored.

<R>-Read a message(s). You may enter a single number, a <+> for the first message, a <-> for the last message, or press <RETURN> to start from the last message (same as <->). Use <N> to read the next message, or <P> to read the previous message. <N> will return to the main menu if there are no more messages. When reading a message you may immediately stop and go on to the next message by pressing any key. You will continue in the direction you were last going.

<S>-Send a private message to another user. You will be prompted for the name of the user to send the message to. That user will be shown the message the next time they log on.

<T>-Resets translation (Ascii/Atascii) 8 bit Atari's normally use ATASCII, 16 bit Atari's (and others) normally use ASCII.

<U>-Upload a file. You will first be informed of how many sectors are free - if your program won't fit, then please don't try to upload it! You will be asked if you are uploading using Xmodem, CRC or Ymodem. Please use CRC if your terminal program can do that. You can NOT upload a file as straight text. Next, you will be asked for the filename (include the extension). As soon as you see the message "Waiting for you to start..." then begin uploading the file. If the upload is succesful, then you will then be asked to descibe the file. Use the same editing commands as the normal message editor.

<V>-The Viewing Library. This has general text/documentation files for reading on-line.

<W>-Set Screen Width

<X>-Xpert mode - gives you 3 options which are saved and used whenever you log on:

Short prompts - <Y> if you are VERY familiar with the BBS. Abbreviates the prompts given to you.

Clear screen - <Y> if you want your screen cleared before menus, msgs, etc.

Continuous read - <Y> allows you to scroll through messages without pressing <N> for next. Press any key to stop. At 1200 baud, it'll be too fast to read, use it only if you are capturing all messages.

<Y>-Yell for SYSOP - sets a flag that you want to talk to the SYSOP. If he sees it, he will cut in.

<Z>-Zmagazine Reading Room

<?>-Prints the main menu.

0-9 Contain games, trivia, BBS lists

and all sorts of things. Try 'em!

<\> This lists the BBS stats - Displays the number of callers for the month, how many of those were 16 bit users and how many were 8 bit users; how many callers were at 300 baud, and how many of the callers were guests rather than password holders.

REMEMBER: More help is available with the 'H' option from the main menu!

Star NX-1000 Printer

By: Eric Plent

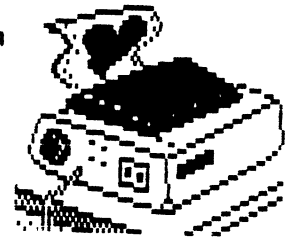
The Star Micronics NX-1000 printer is the next generation of fast, affordable dot matrix printers from Star. It is the successor to the Star NX-10 printer (which was discontinued), but still carries on the quality I have come to expect from Star.

There are four (4) different versions of this printer. The most used version (as far as I know) is the 1000 model. It is also available as the 1000c (with a direct connection to the Commodore 64 computer), the 1000 Rainbow, and the 1000c Rainbow. The Rainbow models are color printers that offer multicolor printing for almost every application.

FEATURES:

Starting with the front control panel, there are four buttons and 10 indicator lights. The buttons are as follows:
(from left to right)

NLQ Type Font Selection
Print Pitch Selection
Paper Feed
On/Off line



The NLQ font selection button controls which of the four built-in fonts are available while printing. They are "Courier", "Sanserif", "Orator" and "Italic". You can also use any of the above fonts in Pica, Elite, Condensed and Proportional pitches (which are selected from the next button over). In total, it gives you a great flexability in your printing. In addition, you can change the font style you are using WHILE PRINTING A DOCUMENT! Simply press the On/Off line button, select the font style and print pitch you want with the other selection buttons, and press the On/Off line button again. It will continue right were it left off without missing a character.

Print speed is 144 characters per second in Draft (default) mode, and 36 characters per second in any Near Letter Quality mode.

I found the print very readable in all modes, but I particularly liked the Orator font for printing letters and other documents. It is very difficult to tell the Orator from the output of a letter quality printer or a typewriter, is so good.

The Star NX-1000 operates with full IBM emulation mode, as well as Epson LX800 emulation. This is selected with the dip switches located under the print ribbon.

I am currently using the NX-1000 with my Atari 800XL and a 256K MIO from ICD, Inc. Since the MIO has a printer interface built in, I do not need an Atari 850 or ICD P:R: Connection to use it. However, I tested it with a Graphix AT interface and it worked flawlessly.

Both pin feed and single sheet operation is supported. To save space, the pin feeder is located in the back of the machine under a lock-down cover. Pin feed paper can be fed in through the back, and single sheets can be fed in through the top. In fact, by moving a switch, you can disable the pin feed operation and use single sheets, without having to remove the pin feed paper. I was very impressed with that.

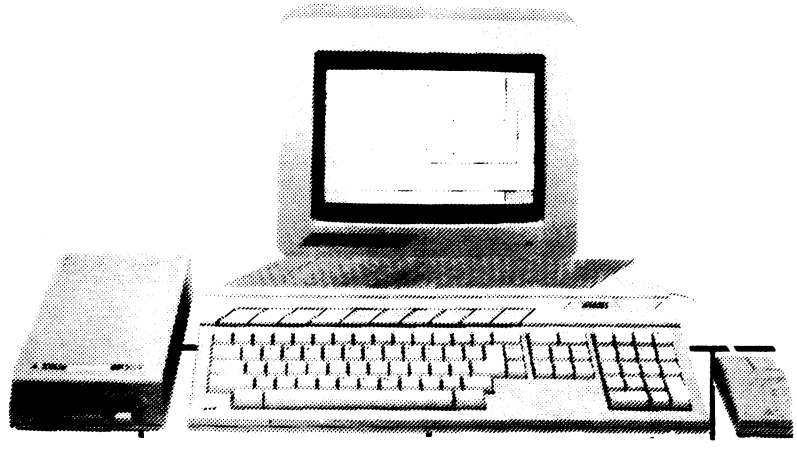
I hope I have given you some food for thought if you are in the market for a new printer. The NX-1000 is an excellent printer, and I highly recommend it.

Approximate Retail Price: $179-$200.

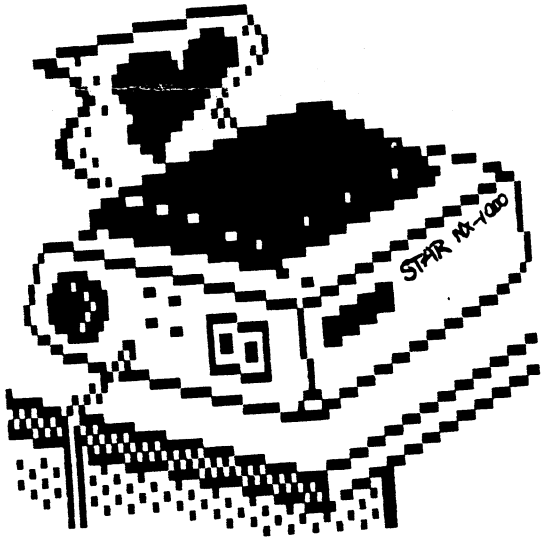
Eric Plent

StarBase I BBS
(201)/938-6906
300/1200/2400
Zmag carrier!

"May you never lose a carrier...."



ATARI



Good News

Guess what-the club has ordered new 3 1/2 disks. Great! 100 to be exact.

Bad News

The price of the disks went up for us. Now we raise the price from $11 a box to $12 a box.

****

WANTED

ARTICLES FOR YOUR NEWSLETTER

IT IS ONLY AS GOOD AS YOU MAKE IT

SEE THE EDITOR

****

ST PRODUCT REVIEWS
EZ-RAM 520 by TERRIFIC CORP.

When I first bought my ST two years ago, I never thought that I would need more than 512K. At the time I did not realize what a memory conscious computer the ST was. Because many programs that interest me require 1Meg I found it necessary to upgrade my 520ST. I chose the EZ-RAM 520 board based on price, reviews in newsletters, reviews in magazines, and a review in ST Informer.

From time of order to time of delivery of the board was four days. Pretty quick considering the volume they seem to be getting. The board came with easy to follow illustrated instructions, a memory test disk, and the board itself. The instructions are very clear and concise. Also included were product updates about ST hardware modifications made by Atari. These proved to be helpful since I have a newer machine with the mentioned modifications. I feel this showed a great sense of responsibility to the customer by Terrific Corp. Installation requires disassembly of the computer, and therefore voids the warranty unless installed by a licensed Atari repair service. The board does however come with it's own 6 month warranty.

Every piece of software that I have run on the upgraded machine works perfectly. I have had no problems and would readily recommend this product to anyone who is shopping for a memory upgrade. To order you can contact Terrific Corp. directly at:

17 St. Mary's Ct.
Brookline, MA 02146
(617) 232-2317

Paul Saccone

ST SOFTWARE REVIEWS
"BARBARIAN"

Barbarian, a game by Psygnosis, happens to be one of the most beautiful games I have yet to see on the ST. The game pits the barbarian, Hegor, against Necron in his underground kingdom. The goal is to destroy Necron and his underground kingdom.

The games instruction manual is very thorough as it tells Hegor's story while giving detailed instructions for game play. At the bottom of the play screen is a band with several different icons that represent left, up, down, right, stop, jump, run, attack, defend, and flee. Game control can be handled in three ways: with the mouse (which is not recommended), the joystick, or by the keyboard. All three methods can be combined at once if you have people helping you. Personally I find keyboard control to be the best way to go.

Along with awesome graphics is the sound. Although there is no music, there are digitized sounds of Hegor, other enemies, and animals. All the grunts and howls add to the game to give a very realistic quality. This is the type of game that can be played for hours at a time without loosing interest. It is very similiar to the 8-bit Montezuma's Revenge. As for game procedures and secrets, I can't tell you those because it would take all the excitement out of it.

"MARBLE MADNESS"

Here we have one of the newer "Arcade Classics". Superb graphics, and excellent sound that would make for a great game on the ST. Right? Maybe not. The game is put out by Electronic Arts. The graphics on the ST closely resemble that of the

arcade and are very impressive. As for the sound: you can play it on an Amiga with 16 voice stereo sound, or on an ST with 3 voices trying really hard. It just doesn't work. I feel it should be programmed to support a MIDI keyboard if one is available. The sound is horrible, it makes a person want to turn down the volume--all the way. What about game play? It's almost there. I found that using the mouse is next to impossible. Using the joystick is OK as long as you have the mouse speed set to fast (don't ask what they have to do with each other). In the arcade version the player controls the marble with a track-ball. This allows for total control of direction and speed, as opposed to the 8 direction joystick. I have yet to try a trck-ball with the home version.

The object of the game is to guide your marble through 6 increasingly difficult mazes. The mazes are in the form of grid type patterns that come from, and go to infinity. After the 6th level the player has won the game. It is a timed game, and a hard one at that. Guiding your marble through trenches, ramps, and tubes is not as easy as it looks. It loses a lot regarding game play from arcade to home, but that is to be expected from a joystick. All in all the game has gotten generally bad reviews. I feel that people are seeing some quality ST software on the market and are beginning to compare the computer to the much more powerful arcade machines. Although it does come close (very), I feel that people are misjudging the ST greatly for what it tries to do, not what it can do. With some practice, the game reveals itself to be quality material. I do feel however, that it is ridiculously overpriced ($49.95) in comparison to what could have been done with sound and gameplay.

Paul Saccone

COMPUTER TUTOR
ST Educational Software Column

Reprinted from ST Informer No.7 1/88
by Joy Bushnell

The programs up for review this month have a wide range of age groups. The first one is called **Aesop's Fables.** Although parts of the program demand that the child knows how to read, they have added sections for preschool age children. This is a story telling program that builds spelling, vocabulary, and memory skills. A good program to introduce your child to what may further his reading comprehension and other basic reading skills. The program also is a wonderful tool that can be used as quality time well worth spent with your precious little ones.

One of our reviewers, Alice Kitzman, has provided two short reviews on some higher level math programs. **Algebra 1-Volume 1** is a beginning level program to help introduce your child to the higher levels of math. Her 12 year old son was able to use this program efficiently.

The second program under review by Alice is called **Geometry-Volume 1.** This seemed to be a very extensive program as well. Being a difficult subject it has some key learning points to help the student understand the concepts in this area of math. Her twelve year old son had more difficulty with this, but contended with the fact that it is definitely a subject that must be done over and over again to better understand it.

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ADVERTISING RATES

	1/4	1/2	Full
1 issue	$5	$10	$20
3 issues	$15	$25	$55
6 issues	$30	$50	$75
1 year	$50	$75	$100

REVIEWS OF SOME OLDER PROGRAMS

"TOP GUNNER"

Top Gunner is not really one game, but a compilation of three. Each of the three games are flight simulation type games. They are: **Hellcat Ace**, **MiG Alley Ace**, and **Air Rescue**. I find MiG Alley Ace to be the best one.

The three games come on a double-sided disk, complete with a 30 page flight manual. The price of this package is $24.95, less than the price of each one of these alone at their original release cost. None of the games have what I consider to be outstanding graphics, but they do have outstanding game-play.

Hellcat Ace is set over the South Pacific and simulates fourteen Japanese-US battles. As usual, the view is from the cockpit. The object-hunt down and obliterate the enemy. Air Rescue is very similar to the arcade classic **Defender**. MiG Alley Ace has a split screen which gives you the view out of both yours and your opponents windshields. Your enemy can be the other player or the computer.

$24.95, Microprose Software, 120 Lake front Drive, Hunt Valley, MD 21030

"BLAZING PADDLES"

This program is an "all in one" illustrating program. It draws, paints, and prints your custom pictures. You can also choose from pre-drawn shapes, fonts, etc.

Uniquely, **Blazing Paddles** works with almost every input device imaginable: light pens, Koala Pad, joystick, track ball, and more. It supports the following printers: Okimate 20, Epson, Gemini 10X and 15X, and Panasonic.

This program, like most other paint programs, can do free-hand sketch, circles, ellipses, squares, rectangles, boxes, text, cut and paste, predrawn shapes, zoom, spray, and fill. Pictures can be saved/loaded via the disk drive, or printed with one of the aformentioned printers.

$34.95, from Baudville, 1001 Medical Park Drive, SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49509

We have **Blazing Paddles** scheduled for an upcoming demo. Information on that meeting will be posted.

Paul **Saccone**

The Michael Katz Turn Around?

What's this? A T.V. commercial for Atari? WOW! Michael Katz, the current chief of the Entertainment Electronics division at Atari has taken a stand. He now has control of the 8-bit products, renewing the 65XE and the 7800 game system. He has turned Tramiel's philosophies on marketing around. If you get a Philadelphia television station you may already have seen the results: a real T.V. commercial. How did Katz so directly contradict Tramiel's "newspaper ads only" (which there haven't been much of) philosophy? Here was Katz's reply, "Our emphasis is to get better distribution on the 8-bit computers. In other words, get major accounts-whether they're specialty dealers or mass merchants or department stores carrying the 8-bit line. T.V. is the right direction to take." Well now you know. I hope it works. -Paul S.

ATARI CORP. ... USER-UNFRIENDLY?

By Betty Kuberski
M.O.M. Vice-President

As a former employee of Atari Inc., I still have quite a bit of loyalty to my old employer. One thing I am coming to realize, though, is just how different things are now at Atari Corp..

I was one of the many workers Atari laid off in their R.I.F. (Reduction In Force) of June '84. It came as a surprise to no-one when we found out that our Regional Service Center in Somerset was being closed. Rumors had been circulating for some time. Still, it was tough to leave all the people I had come to know there - we were like a family. We would all have to go our separate ways.

I managed to make good use of my repair experience on Atari products - a local Authorized Service Center, the Video Connection in Somerset, asked me if I would do their Atari repairs for them. I have been their repair technician ever since, expanding my knowledge to Commodore computers and Star printers as well.

It's ironic that, now that I have been dealing with Commodore, they seem to be a much friendlier company than Atari Corp. has become. This is just the opposite of how things were, previous to mid-1984. Commodore was making home computers that were much less user-friendly than Atari's, and they had the reputation of being "The Bad Guys" (but then, my point of view may be slightly biased!). Atari was the underdog, forced to compete with lower-priced and lower-quality products from Mattel and Coleco on the video games front, and from Commodore in the home computer market. Atari's parent company, Warner Communications, was certainly not marketing the products correctly, and Atari's image as a "toy company" proved nearly fatal.

These days, Commodore has made an effort to make their computers easier to use, with the introduction of GEOS software for the 64c, the somewhat more versatile 128 (although the usefulness of CP/M compatibility is questionable), a faster disk drive, and the quite competent Amiga. Still, I think Atari's products have the definite edge.

As far as distribution and availability of service are concerned, Atari is failing miserably. One must be very determined in hunting down a store that sells Atari computers or software. Jack Tramiel has gone so far as to buy a retail chain in order to sell his products! Time will tell whether this proves to be a good move or not (I have reservations). Independent servicers have become just as hard to find, because they are fed up with Atari's lack of support for them. Commodore, on the other hand, has a good network of Authorized Servicers, who are kept up-to-date with service information and diagnostic revisions.

I made a disappointing discovery on a recent visit to California. I was in the San Francisco area, and decided to stop by Atari's offices in Sunnyvale. I spoke to Rich Ludwig, inquiring about the status of Video Connection's account. I had several times attempted to order parts with this account - by mail, as Atari was not accepting any phone orders - and received no reply, and no parts! I was told by Rich that that was an old account, and that Video Connection would have to re-apply to become an Authorized Service Center all over again! I brought back a package containing numerous forms to be filled out and returned to Atari accompanied by photos and fees. I gave the forms to the store owners - guess that's the end of that!

On that same visit to Atari, I met with Sandi Austin, the User Group Coordinator. I had hoped to bring back some useful information for Micros of Monmouth regarding Atari Festivals and other Atari-supported activities, but I was instead discouraged. It seems Atari is not as beneficent as we were led to believe.

Does all this sound like Atari Corp. is a user-friendly company? Well, consider this - how friendly could a company really be when its C.E.O.'s motto is "Business is War!"?